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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF PROGRAM EVALUATION IN ADULT LITERACY VOLUNTEER TUTOR PROGRAMS IN ALBERTA

BY

CANDICE SUSAN JACKSON

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

IN
ADULT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ADULT, CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Nature and Extent of Program Evaluation in Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Programs in Alberta submitted by Candice Susan Jackson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult and Higher Education in the Department of Adult, Career and Technology Education.

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Date: Sept. 28 / 1992

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family; my husband John,
my children, Caitlin and William,
and to my parents, Eva and John Gibbons.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature and extent of program evaluation currently being undertaken in adult literacy volunteer tutor programs in Alberta. Information was sought on the factors determining whether or not program evaluation is undertaken in volunteer tutor literacy programs, whether or not literacy programs adjust according to evaluation findings, and whether program location influences evaluation procedures.

A survey questionnaire was mailed to 73 literacy coordinators in Alberta. The questionnaire was designed to gather information about literacy programs (e.g., location, size, sources of funding, existence of an advisory board), literacy coordinators (full-time or part-time, years of experience) and literacy program evaluation (e.g., whether program evaluation was conducted, the procedures followed in evaluation, the reported barriers to evaluation and whether or not a formal evaluation policy for Alberta should be established).

The literacy programs participating in this study were largely small rural programs funded by the Community Programs Branch of Alberta Advanced Education. The majority of the programs worked with an advisory board. One half of the literacy coordinators surveyed reported that they conducted formal program evaluation. The findings indicated that program location (urban/rural) had no significant impact on whether or not program evaluation was conducted.

The following were the most often reported characteristics of program evaluation: planning priorities are based on evaluation results, plans are made to implement the priorities, and tutor and student opinions are sought in the evaluation process. Reported barriers to program evaluation include a lack of time and a lack of training in evaluation procedures. Over half of the respondents felt that an evaluation policy for literacy programs should be developed. The

majority of respondents strongly felt that literacy coordinators, students and tutors should be involved in the development of such a policy.

Based on these findings, literacy coordinators should be encouraged and given opportunities to develop skills in conducting program evaluations which include formal and informal techniques of gathering program information. Standards for effective volunteer tutor literacy programs in Alberta should be developed, taking into consideration the unique nature of the volunteer tutor literacy program.

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CHAPTER ONE

Overview and Purpose of the Study

Background to the Study

My interest in the area of adult literacy program evaluation came about as a result of my work as a literacy coordinator in a rural literacy program in Alberta. Like most coordinators of community-based literacy programs in this province, I have struggled with the challenge of providing a program that meets the needs of low-literate adults in the community while working part-time hours. However, I began to wonder if the program I was coordinating was, indeed, an effective program. How did the adult learners perceive the literacy program? What were the views of the volunteer tutors?

Although I did receive written comments from the volunteers following tutor training, I conducted no formal appraisal on the other aspects of the program. There were several reasons for this. The aspects of literacy program evaluation were not (and are not) part of the training offered to new literacy coordinators through the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta, nor are they mentioned as part of the duties of a literacy coordinator in the Management Handbook produced by the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta and given to every new coordinator. Other than reporting the numbers of students and tutors in the program in a twelve month period, there was also no encouragement to determine the real effectiveness of my literacy program from the major funder, Alberta Advanced Education.

In any case, I soon discovered that the wide-ranging duties of this challenging part-time job left no time to contemplate program evaluation.

However, I was interested in how the literacy program was perceived by members of the community. I knew of other literacy coordinators in situations similar to mine and I was interested in discovering if their views on program evaluation were similar as well.

This personal curiosity about program evaluation was increased with the discovery of a self-study program evaluation kit designed for adult literacy volunteer tutor programs by Audrey Thomas for the Open Learning Agency in the province of British Columbia (1989). It led me to conduct a survey of literacy coordinators in the province of Alberta on their views of literacy program evaluation. The survey was conducted as part of the requirements leading to a Master's degree in Adult and Higher Education at the University of Alberta.

Context of the Study

Adult Literacy

There is a growing concern in the field of adult literacy regarding the definition of operational parameters for adult literacy programs. In its resolution passed in 1988, the International Reading Association (IRA) called for the development and promotion of standards for volunteer tutoring programs as well as the development of standards relating to program evaluation (Thomas,1989, p. 2). In its background statement, the IRA acknowledged the contribution of volunteer tutors in the eradication of illiteracy, but called for well-designed preparation programs. The IRA perceives the high drop-out rate to be partially accounted for by program deficiencies and the lack of qualified tutors (Thomas, 1989, p. 2). In her research leading to the development of an evaluation kit for literacy programs, Thomas (1989) discovered a growing "climate of concern" surrounding the issue of program evaluation:

> The need had been expressed for some kind of "tool" or "process" that could be used for program evaluation -- either by the programs themselves (self-evaluation), or by someone external should the need arise. Currently, no national standards exist in Canada. However, most literacy programs using volunteers do engage in some forms of evaluation that usually solicit feedback from learners and volunteer tutors about their experience(s) in the program. Funding and sponsoring bodies often require quantitative and other data as well to justify the disbursement of funds and/or a program's continued existence. (p. 2)

In the United Kingdom, an emphasis on evaluating the effectiveness of basic skills programs for adults has been in place for some time. This focus has been due in large part to the Education Reform Act that places importance on local management and strategic planning of programs (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, 1990). In 1983, the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit published a "Discussion Document on Good Practice in Adult Literacy and Basic Skills." This document served as a starting point for discussions that encouraged a review of basic education programs at local levels. The original discussion document was followed by several supplemental documents, leading up to the publication of "Evaluating Effectiveness in Adult Literacy and Basic Skills." The document was intended to "help LEA's (Local Education Authorities) monitor, support and evaluate basic skills provision for adults" (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, Introduction). These publications further underline the growing commitment by adult educators to contribute to the effectiveness of adult basic education programs for adults.

The Policy Committee of the Movement for Canadian Literacy has outlined "General Principles of Good Practice" as part of their document, "Organizing Adult Literacy and Basic Education in Canada" (White and Hoddinott, 1991). Recognizing the uneven development of literacy programming in Canada over the past twenty years, the Movement for Canadian Literacy developed a policy

that is intended to "address the need for a coordinated policy for Literacy in Canada, a policy that would ensure that there is **equitable access to quality basic education for all adults who may need or desire it"** (emphasis in original) (White and Hoddinott, p.5).

In the section of this document entitled "Program Evaluation," three main aspects of evaluation are considered. These are (a) the purposes of program evaluation (evaluation for program development and evaluation for accountability); (b) internal (literacy coordinator) and external (funder) evaluations; and (c) discussion of the participatory evaluation process. The framework for program evaluation developed by the Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) recommends annual internal program evaluations (for the purpose of program development) and external evaluations (also for the purpose of program development) conducted every three years.

The MCL recommends that evaluations for the purpose of program accountability be the responsibility of the provincial government department concerned with literacy and adult basic education. Other important recommendations include the provision of ongoing budget allocations for program evaluation, and the need to ensure those evaluation procedures critically examine all aspects of a program. This critical stance is more likely if program evaluation procedures are not "overly subjective" (White and Hoddinott, p. 30).

The Literacy Coordinators of Alberta (LCA), in their 1989 statement of Goals and Objectives, state that the LCA will "work with other organizations to establish certification standards for literacy coordinators and tutors" and specifically "develop a system for the evaluation of literacy projects, coordinators and tutors" (LCA, 1989). To this end, the LCA is currently undertaking an evaluation of the Regional Resource People Project, a professional development arm of the LCA, to determine the attitudes of literacy coordinators towards

professional certification and the effectiveness of the Regional Resource People Project. These goal statements reflect a concern on the part of the LCA for literacy program development and accountability.

The interest in improved programs, effective instruction and the development of standards for adult literacy programs explains why educators are interested in the evaluation of programs. Participants in the process at all levels will benefit from research into the evaluation practices of adult literacy programs.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation as a field of practice is based on the premise that an examination and analysis of a program and all of its facets will lead to the identification of areas for improvement of that program. While some of the early program evaluation literature commonly focuses on the managerial perspective and the importance of accountability (Alkin,1969; Provus,1969; Stake,1967; Stufflebeam,1968), adult education has tended to introduce a consumer perspective. As Steele (1989) notes, "Adult educators are especially interested in evaluation that results in enhanced programs and in increased professional competence "(p.261). Some educators, notably Knowles (1980) express the belief that, while nothing causes more feelings of guilt, inadequacy and frustration in educators than evaluation, it has become overemphasized to the point that,"...this very overemphasis has caused an underproduction of practical, feasible and artistic evaluation in terms of program review and improvement" (p. 198).

Generally, evaluation is seen as a positive step toward program improvement. One of the positive aspects of evaluation is stated by Raizen and Rossi (1981): "The knowledge gained from a program evaluation can be useful to program personnel who want practice-oriented information that may help provide

more effective instruction" (p. 37). Effective educational programs are concerned with examining program components such as recruitment strategies, orientation and counseling procedures, diagnostic testing and assessment tools, instructional methods and materials, and follow-up procedures (Lerche, 1985).

However, as pointed out by White and Hoddinott (1991), it is difficult to determine program quality and effectiveness if systematic monitoring and evaluation of programs does not exist. They also note,

> In addition, if as a nation we are to guarantee equal opportunities for all to participate in the economic, social and political life of the nation, we must ensure that the education available to adults in need of upgrading is not in any respect second class. The programs we provide ought to be at least *equal* to those provided at all other levels of education (page 7).

Purpose of the Study and Statement of the Research Questions

The major purpose of this study was to explore the nature and extent of program evaluation currently undertaken in adult literacy volunteer tutor programs in Alberta. The research questions that guided the survey address some of my own concerns as a literacy coordinator in a rural volunteer tutor literacy program but also seek to discover how literacy coordinators in Alberta view the entire process of evaluation in programs. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Are there differences in the program evaluation procedures currently in use in urban and rural adult literacy volunteer tutor programs in Alberta?
2. What are the determining factors regarding whether or not evaluation is being conducted in adult literacy volunteer tutor programs?

3. Do volunteer literacy programs adjust according to evaluation findings and if so, how?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will be of interest to those involved in the administration, implementation and funding of adult literacy volunteer tutor programs in Alberta. There are several dimensions to the practical significance of the study. The results may assist in decision-making at all levels: government policy makers, literacy coordinators and tutors or teachers of programs.

It has been suggested that funding decisions may be based on the demonstrated effectiveness of an educational program (Thomas, 1989). An evaluation process that identifies the strengths and weaknesses of a program will suggest to literacy coordinators and tutors where their teaching and training methods could be altered to overcome program deficits. Literacy coordinators could also direct their attention to strategies that would help improve program areas identified as lacking.

The Community Programs Branch of Alberta Advanced Education funds the majority of adult literacy programs in the province. Although literacy coordinators are required by Community Programs Branch to maintain statistical information regarding the number of adult students and tutors involved with the program, the reasons why these adults were attracted to the literacy program and the educational background of students and tutors, there is no requirement that information be gathered regarding whether or not adult students and tutors are well served by the program. The Government of Alberta designates $50.8 million annually through three departments in support of Adult Basic Education (in both academic upgrading and literacy programs) (Alberta Literacy Inventory, 1990,

p.4). It is logical to assume that government departments would want to be aware of the effectiveness of literacy programs and of the factors affecting the evaluation of such programs.

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout the study:

Literacy Coordinator – A person who oversees the day to day operation of an adult literacy program. The coordinator may be involved in promoting the program, training volunteer tutors, matching volunteer tutors with adult students, maintaining a library or resource collection and maintaining links with the community through an advisory council.

Volunteer tutor program -- A program (either institutional or community-based) designed to help adults read and write with the support of volunteer tutors, usually on a one-to-one basis.

Community-based adult literacy volunteer tutor programs -- Those adult literacy volunteer tutor programs hosted mainly by Further Education Councils in Alberta communities and funded primarily by the Community Programs Branch of Alberta Advanced Education.

Formal program evaluation -- The systematic process of appraising the value and quality of an educational program.

Delimitations

The following delimitations apply to this study:

1. The study does not encompass adult literacy programs sponsored by institutions such as tribal councils or private societies.

2. The study is delimited to the factors perceived by literacy coordinators to affect program evaluation and the implementation of recommended changes.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in relation to this study:

1. Some program evaluation is currently being done in adult literacy volunteer tutor programs in Alberta.
2. Literacy coordinators in Alberta are willing to offer their ideas regarding program evaluation.

Organization of the Thesis

This chapter has provided an overview of the study, including an introduction, purpose of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, delimitations and assumptions. Chapter two presents a review of the research literature related to areas of educational program evaluation with an emphasis on the nature of program evaluation in adult literacy programs. The design and methodology of the research are presented in chapter three. The results of the data analysis are reported in chapter four. Chapter five includes a discussion of the findings as well as recommendations for future research, followed by the reference list and appendices.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Related Literature

This study examined the nature and extent of program evaluation currently being conducted in adult literacy volunteer tutor programs in Alberta. The literature review provides an overview of research in the areas of program evaluation, evaluation of educational programs and in particular, evaluation as a criterion of good practice in adult literacy programs in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Definitions of program evaluation

There are many different definitions of program evaluation found in current literature. Numerous writers define program evaluation as a process used to determine whether or not a program is meeting its goals (Lerche, 1985; Popham, 1988; Raizen & Rossi, 1981; Willing,1989). Part of this process involves a clear development of goals, followed by the installation of a system of record keeping to monitor whether or not these goals have been achieved (Lerche, 1981).

However, the appraisal or determination of whether or not goals have been achieved may be only one aspect of defining systematic program evaluation. Popham' (1988) states his definition as follows: "Systematic educational evaluation consists of a formal apraisal of the quality of educational phenomena" (p.7). According to Popham, the program characteristics to be appraised could include outcomes of the educational endeavour, instructional programs, or educational products. Popham's definition includes the phrase "systematic educational evaluation" (page 7) to distinguish formal educational

evaluation from the informal kinds of evaluation we do every day. In Popham's definition, **systematic** evaluation means **formal** evaluation.

Franklin and Thrasher (1976) define program evaluation as focusing more on the outcomes and impacts of program activities. Guba and Lincoln (1989) define evaluation as first, a sociopolitical process, but also as a joint, collaborative process that is continuous, recursive and highly divergent. Evaluation is also described by Guba and Lincoln as a process with unpredictable outcomes: a process that creates reality.

Others argue that a definition of program evaluation evolves from one's own philosophy of education (Knowles, 1980) and how one intends to use the evaluation information (Grotelueschen, 1980). According to Knowles, those who espouse the philosophy that educators must be concerned with "making changes in a human being" (p.222), will naturally also be motivated to measure changes as precisely as possible. The dominant theme in this interpretation of program evaluation, says Knowles, is quantification. On the other hand, if an educator is committed to a philosophy of education that is defined as "a process of facilitating self-inquiry and self-development" (p. 222), that educator is more likely to define program evaluation as a process involving students and others in collecting data to assess the effectiveness of the educational program. The dominant theme in this case, according to Knowles, is involvement. Knowles concludes his discussion by asserting that the first definition of program evaluation reflects the philosophy of pedagogy; the second, andragogy.

Purposes of program evaluation

In the field of educational program evaluation, there are differing views as to the purposes and benefits of conducting evaluation. Several of these views are discussed in this section.

The major advantage of program evaluation is that it provides detailed information about a program. It can help to identify program strengths and weaknesses (Grotelueschen, 1980; Herman, Morris, & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987) which can serve as an impetus for improving program quality (Knox, 1980; Knowles, 1980). Crandall, Lerche and Marchilonis (1984) describe program evaluation as "the final link in the program chain". (p.141). They go on to explain the importance of evaluation as a way of testing the strength of the program chain.

> If evaluation is done well, it assists program personnel in isolating and strengthening weak links in the program chain. Synonymous with repairing weak links is more successful programs, more satisfied learners and increased retention. (Crandall et al., page 141)

Knowles (1980) writes that there are two basic purposes of program evaluation. The first is to aid in the improvement of the organizational operation. This may include the planning process, decision making procedures, personnel, physical facilities and finances. The second basic purpose of evaluation according to Knowles is to aid in the improvement of the program itself -- the objectives, the clientele's outcomes, the methods and techniques used and the program materials.

Anderson and Ball (1978) outline six major purposes of program evaluation: to contribute to decisions about program installation, to contribute to

decisions about program continuation or expansion, to contribute to decisions about program modification, to obtain evidence to rally support for a program, and, conversely, to obtain evidence to rally opposition to social and other processes.

Other purposes of evaluation are to justify and advocate program accountability (Knox, 1980), to provide potential directions for the future (Herman et al., 1987; Willing, 1989), and to identify potential participant needs and establish program emphases (Grotelueschen, 1980).

Erwin (1991) points out that program evaluation may serve other purposes. Evaluation may be a political action in that it may give program administrators information about how program resources are being utilized or it may be societal if it generates an understanding of the function of education by the public.

The purposes of program evaluation, as seen by several writers, are diverse, from providing detailed information of a single program to helping to improve an educational organization. Generally, evaluation is seen as providing positive ways to improve program quality.

Program Evaluation Models

In this section, four models of program evaluation will be presented and analyzed regarding their applicability to an informal adult education program such as a volunteer tutor adult literacy program.

Characteristics of Early Models

Models of program evaluation date from the 1950s. While numerous models of evaluation of educational programs are provided in the literature, many of these early models were developed in institutional settings. These led to evaluation models with several distinct characteristics:

• an emphasis on educator or evaluator control. The evaluator (in these models) is responsible for designing the evaluation, setting objectives and deciding what data to collect (Scriven, 1967; Stake, 1967; Stufflebeam, 1971).

• an emphasis on systematic, formal evaluation. Most models developed by authors in the field of educational program evaluation recommend formal evaluation as the most effective way to judge program success (Scriven, 1967; Stake, 1967; Stufflebeam, 1971).

• an emphasis on educational objectives. Tyler (1950), one of the early theorists in program evaluation, defined what was to become one of the most basic themes in program evaluation:

> The process of evaluation is essentially the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are actually being realized by the curriculum and instruction. (Tyler, p. 105)

This theme has been refined and developed (Bloom, 1956; Popham, 1970) and such adult educators as Knowles (1970) and Houle (1961) have lent their support to the concept.

• an emphasis on quantification and measurement. This follows from the previous theme of determining whether objectives are met and is promoted by an increasing capability of educators to collect large amounts of data through new technology. Authors who use data as the basis of evaluation are Houle (1972) and Stufflebeam (1971). (Adapted from Forest, 1976)

These characteristics of evaluator control, emphasis on formal evaluation procedures, formal objectives and measurement are not necessarily in accord with the character of an informal adult education program (such as a volunteer tutor literacy program). According to Forest (1976), there has been "too much reliance on and direct imitation of evaluation models developed for other educational systems" (p. 346).

The development of program evaluation models has, however, provided an important information base which can be adapted to meet the needs of any particular educational program. Four of these models are examined below.

Goal-oriented evaluation

The goal-oriented model (Popham, 1975; Bloom, Hastings & Madaus, 1971) emphasizes that evaluation should assess student progress and the effectiveness of educational innovations. This approach has three key elements: the use of goal statements, test score analysis and a focus on the discrepancy between a set goal and the actual situation. The emphasis on student progress is the main strength of the goal-oriented model; however, there is a risk of ignoring process in favour of goal attainment. The focus on goal achievement and test score analysis is somewhat at odds with the open-entry and exit nature of volunteer tutor adult literacy programs. While goal setting is admirable, many adults attending literacy programs are not yet at the stage in their learning where long-term, highly defined goal setting is possible. Moreover, adults may make gains as they experience the process of learning. These gains may be measureable; often they are not.

Goal-free evaluation

Proposed by Scriven (1974), goal-free evaluation proposes that evaluation should assess program effects "based on criteria apart from the program's own conceptual framework, especially on the extent to which real client needs are met" (Herman, Joan L., Morris, Lynn Lyons and Fitz-Gibbon, Carol Taylor, 1987, p. 10). The consumer or client is the focus of the evaluation, which is described as "holistic" in nature. (Worthen and Sanders, 1973). Scriven developed this model after observing evaluators who focused solely on program results related to program goals. It was Scriven's opinion that evaluators can develop a form of tunnel vision when examining only those program results directly related to program goals and may ignore other real unplanned program outcomes. Scriven, in the traditional mode, assigns all reponsibility for program evaluation to the evaluator alone.

Decision-oriented evaluation

The role of evaluation in the decision-oriented model is to facilitate intelligent judgements by decision makers (Stufflebeam,1971). Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) Model has been widely accepted and used among evaluators to aid managers in decision making. The approach taken in the CIPP Model is best explained in Stufflebeam's definition of evaluation: "Evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives"(Popham, 1988,p. 34). These three major steps -- delineating, obtaining, and providing -- are all concerned directly with isolating, gathering and presenting information to educational decision makers.

The CIPP Model also distinguishes between four different types of educational decisions. These are (1) planning decisions, (2) structuring decisions, (3) implementing decisions and (4) recycling decisions. For each of these decisions, Stufflebeam recommends a corresponding type of evaluation, that is, context evaluation, input evaluation, process evaluation and product evaluation. Analysis of data relates these things to the immediate management of the program being evaluated. Stufflebeam points to Scriven's (1967) distinction between evaluation for decision making and evaluation for accountability. Formative evaluation, according to Scriven, is proactive and aimed at helping decision makers while summative evaluation is reactive and can serve as a basis for accountability.

Naturalistic evaluation

Naturalistic or qualitative evaluation models differ from earlier models of program evaluation in significant ways. Two naturalistic models will be examined briefly: Guba and Lincoln's model (1989) and Stake's responsive model (1975).

Guba and Lincoln contend that an evaluation may be considered naturalistic as opposed to scientific depending on the degree to which constraints are placed on two variables: antecedents and possible outputs. Antecedent variables are factors which effect the program at the outset. Outputs are the possible consequences resulting from the program being evaluated. When contrasted with scientific inquiry, which imposes considerable constraints on both antecedents and outputs, a naturalistic inquiry imposes few such constraints.

Stake and others (1987) submit that evaluation should portray the processes of evaluation and the perspectives of stakeholders or key people involved with the program. A departure from his early work which supported a

highly structured, judgemental approach, Stake developed his strongly participant oriented responsive evaluation model to counteract what he felt was a lack of attention given to those for whom the evaluation was being conducted. Two of the assumptions of responsive evaluation are:

• Students, teachers and other observers exercise the most relevant critical judgements with regard to their own program.

• Responsive evaluation can help resolve instructional problems using those people most directly experiencing the problem (Stake, 1987, p.24).

Relevance of models to adult literacy programs

The program evaluation models discussed here cover a wide spectrum of educational situations. There are aspects of these models that could apply to an informal adult education program; however, it is worthwhile repeating that all of these models have been developed with regard to an institutional educational setting, with a different philosophical basis and more rigid constraints than those found in volunteer tutor literacy programs. An institution is responsible for establishing programs, setting program goals, and seeing students through to the completion of the program. A literacy program may well have set goals but the program is designed by the student with guidance from her tutor. Because there are no set limits on when a program begins and ends, an evaluation of a program such as this goes beyond what has been proposed in the literature thus far.

It has been argued that the use of the word "model" in describing various approaches to program evaluation has led some educators to believe that a model, once applied, is guaranteed to effect solutions to a wide variety of educational challenges in a wide variety of situations. Chang (1992) points out

that a model is really " a framework within which details must be adapted to the individual program" (p. 13).

Literacy Program Evaluation

An increasing number of adult educators (Thomas, 1989; Chang Barker, 1992; White and Hoddinott, 1991) and funders (Government of Alberta, 1991) of adult basic education programs are concerned with evaluation of these programs to determine program effectiveness. This section discusses several evaluation tools or models which have been developed for literacy programs as a result of this concern.

Evaluating Effectiveness in the United Kingdom

The Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) is the national agency for adult literacy, numeracy and related basic skills in England and Wales. In 1983 ALBSU introduced a series of discussion documents on Good Practice in Adult Literacy and Basic Skills. One of the most recent discussion documents, "Evaluating Effectiveness in Adult Literacy and Basic Skills," is an attempt to provide those who are involved with adult basic education a tool which can be used to indicate program effectiveness. The document contains material which provides a background outlining the current practise of literacy education in the United Kingdom, as well as the basic components of the evaluating tool. The discussion document points out that "Much of the evaluation of adult literacy and basic skills provision to date has been a fairly informal process" (ALBSU, 1990, Introduction).

ALBSU's philosophy, which has guided the creation of this evaluation framework, is outlined as follows:

• any framework for evaluating effectiveness of basic skills provision must reflect the principles and practices of the service

• a framework needs to be accessible to as many people involved in basic skills work as possible

• there needs to be a balance between evaluation and doing the job. As the most important part of basic skills work is teaching, evaluation should not be conducted at the expense of providing this service

• time and resources are needed to undertake evaluation.

ALBSU's approach to evaluating program effectiveness is based on three factors: inputs, process and outcomes. ALBSU asserts that much attention has been paid to program outcomes and relatively little to inputs and process. In their words, "[T]here is a strong link between outcomes, process and inputs in basic skills work. It is impossible to achieve successful outcomes in basic skills work if inputs, in terms of funding and professional support, are minimal" (ALBSU, 1990, Introduction).

The evaluation tool itself is in the form of a checklist. Five major program components are listed: planning, resources, provision, practice, and staffing. A series of questions accompany each program component. The person completing the checklist is able to indicate answers according to a range from 1 to 10, rather than a qualified "yes" or "no." This assessment depends to a large extent on personal judgement. ALBSU suggests a target score for each component of 75% of the total possible score. A score of 75% would indicate high quality basic skills service; a total between 50% and 75% would indicate adequate provision with room for improvement; a score of less then 50% would

indicate inadequate basic skills provision with considerable need for improvement.

The Canadian Perspective: a Program Evaluation Kit

In Canada, an evaluation tool targeted at volunteer tutor adult literacy programs has been developed by Thomas (1989). In a manner similar to the ALBSU document, Thomas designed this evaluation kit with the practitioner in mind. She notes that,

> It is generally recognized that policies and funding determine practice in that programs usually adjust to the funds available. In the evaluation process developed, this has been turned around: we have tried to give programs indicators of what is currently considered the ideal in good practice and let the programs target what they would like to improve for the next year. (p.1)

Thomas adopted the term "good practice" coined by the British; and, through a search of the literature followed by consultation with literacy practitioners across Canada, compiled seventeen Good Practice Statements which form the basis for the literacy program evaluation kit.

The kit contains four questionnaires. For the program as a whole, there are two instruments: a program questionnaire and a program profile. The program questionnaire is the actual evaluation instrument. The program profile when completed provides descriptive and quantitiative data. These data are important, says Thomas, because they give a picture of the resources available for the program and provide a cross-check on administrative features of the program such as record-keeping. A tutor questionnaire and learner questionnaire are also included in the kit.

The evaluation kit attempts to be flexible enough to be useful to most programs, regardless of size or location. Thomas provides suggestions to potential users which suggest various ways of conducting the evaluation, for example, a gathering of all tutors in a small program to discuss the program over a three hour period, or a representative team of tutors and learners in a larger program. While the evaluation may appear extensive and daunting to coordinators, Thomas notes that, after the program has been evaluated once, annual investigations may focus only on those parts of the program that require improvement or attention. A point of concern in this process is the learner questionnaire. Thomas suggests that while not all learners would be able to complete the questionnaire individually, their tutor could give them assistance or a third party not connected with the program could provide assistance.

Effective Programs and Evaluation Practice in the United States

There is a growing body of research in the United States and, to a lesser extent, in Canada, concerned with documenting the practices of what are considered quality adult literacy programs. While organizations are developing some standards of effective programs (ALBSU, 1990; White and Hoddinott, 1991) and while the efforts of writers such as Thomas (1989) have given some concrete beginnings to literacy program evaluation in Canada, there is still concern that program evaluation is not being conducted in a systematic manner. Researchers note that literacy program evaluation is haphazard (Padak & Padak, 1991) and frequently not a standard practice in adult literacy programs (Thomas, 1987).

Several American researchers in the last decade (Lerche, 1985; Balmuth, 1986; Bear, Templeton and Crandall, 1987; Knudson-Fields, 1988; Padak and

Padak, 1991) have conducted surveys of the literature or surveys of literacy programs considered to be exemplary in an attempt to discover the characteristics of effective and successful adult literacy programs.

The National Adult Literacy Project survey was a large study of 225 literacy programs in the United States. Conducted in 1985, the survey was designed to report on effective practices in literacy programs. A second objective of the survey was to make the gathered information available to literacy practitioners. Program evaluation was one of eight program components under investigation. Those who participated in the study defined program evaluation as "a combination of formal recordkeeping and less formal internal monitoring of program operation" (Lerche, p.177). The findings of the study included the fact that most of the programs (exact figures were not published) collected quantifiable data as part of funding requirements. These data included student test scores, hours of attendance, completions, dropouts, and demographic information. Respondents described the process of collecting program data difficult and time-consuming, and only a small number of programs in the NALP study reported that they use evaluation data as a starting point for program planning. Despite this seeming lack of use of program data, the study found that all of the programs surveyed participated in some form of both external and internal evaluation. Most of the programs were externally evaluated by the funding agency (state, federal or private). If internal evaluations were conducted, they were usually the responsibility of the program director (Lerche, p. 179).

The authors of the study concluded that, while literacy educators were sincerely interested in improving the quality of their programs, they lacked what was termed a "well-developed management plan" (p. 186) which would facilitate collecting, analyzing and using program data for improving effectiveness. The

study found that few program directors could describe their evaluation methods and many equated evaluation with filling in forms required by the funder.

The recommendations of the NALP study were directed toward literacy practitioners and included the following:

• practitioners should develop evaluation expertise through reading, taking courses or consulting with experts in the field.

• program goals and objectives should be set through the work of students, staff and community members.

• practitioners should design both summative and formative evaluation instruments to measure program goals. The instruments should collect input from staff, students and community.

• practitioners should create and implement a unified system for collecting, analyzing and using data for making changes in the program. This system should become part of the routine operation of the program and should "specify responsibilities, procedures and timelines for evaluation tasks and should embrace all program components (p. 187).

Balmuth (1986) undertook a review and analysis of existing research and conducted interviews with Task Force members and program officials associated with the Adult Beginning Reader Project in New York state. She also intervewed 13 heads of adult basic education programs in New York state. As a result of her interviews with practitioners in the field of adult basic education, Balmuth reports that a characteristic of effective programs (according to ABE providers and practitioners) is that they can recruit students and convince them that they can succeed. These types of programs also utilize an intake conference outlining student expectations, the amount of progress expected of the student and a comprehensive reading diagnosis. She describes successful instructional methods as a combination of structured phonics approach with less structured

methods. The factors discussed by Balmuth are related to successful reading achievement of adult English speakers with reading skills below the grade five level.

Affective factors are also important in determining the effectiveness of a literacy program. Balmuth defines these factors as including teacher morale, sensitivity, compassion and the ability to explain things well. Other criteria of effectiveness include staff development, policies to encourage student attendance, provision of counseling services, provision of long rather than short-term courses. It is interesting to note that no mention is made here of program evaluation as an important characteristic of an effective literacy program.

Bear, Templeton and Crandall (1987) reported on a 1984 study by Crandall of Far West Associates. Crandall studied 31 exemplary adult literacy programs in the United States and included the following as characteristic of effective programs: success in recruitment, thoughtful learner orientation, effective counselling for learners, and non-threatening testing. Only one item on the questionnaire is concerned with program evaluation: i.e., " What information do you have of the success of your program?" Some examples of answers included testing gain scores, passing the GED, gaining employment or promotion as a result of increased literacy, increasing self-esteem and self-confidence for students, etc.

Knudson-Fields (1988) studied adult literacy service provided in the state of Idaho. A survey of 47 programs which provided service to adults indicated that fewer than one-third of the programs participated in program evaluation. Insufficient money, time, and staff were the reasons most often cited for lack of involvement in program evaluation. Knudson-Fields recommended on-going collection of adult literacy program data, as well as evaluation of current programs in Idaho.

Padak and Padak (1991) conducted a search of the literature to discover the criteria used to determine effectiveness of adult literacy programs in the United States. From the 19 program descriptions which they uncovered, they classified the criteria into three categories: personal factors, programmatic factors and external factors. The personal factors included academic achievement as well as quality of life for students. In effective programs, students progressed in reading achievement as measured by standardized tests. Equally importantly, "Students also reported changes in self-esteem, in relationships with others, and in literacy-related or general self-confidence, and in some cases these factors were used as indicators of program effectiveness". (p. 375)

In their reporting on the research, Padak and Padak identified programmatic factors such as the number of students enrolled in a program, the content of the program and instructional methods used as well as staff development opportunities as indicators of effective programs. They also discovered that program effectiveness was determined in some part by external factors -- an assessment of learner change by those not involved with the program, and to a lesser extent, financial criteria. Their examination of the literature led them to conclude that, although program evaluation seemed to be broad-based within programs, the extent of evaluation within programs varied greatly. They concluded that "American adult literacy program evaluation is haphazard" (p.376).

Padak and Padak also developed guidelines for literacy program evaluation. They state that the most important aspect of evaluation is the determination of how well program goals are being met. The program goals should be established early in the life of the program, and the evaluation should follow the goals of the program. A second important guideline is the notion that evaluation should be comprehensive and that it should facilitate use of data to

identify program areas that need to be strengthened. The researchers believe that program evaluation should also be systematic. The use of anecdotal data, while often interesting, does not indicate whether program goals have been met or where improvement is needed. Data may be gathered from informal tests or from interviews with staff or students, but it should be "gathered and reported in a systematic manner" (p.376).

Some criteria of effective programs as outlined by Padak and Padak include:

- •links with community agencies, services,and public schools
- •collaboration of learners and teachers in establishing goals
- •staff development programs
- •curricula developed to meet learner needs

"Program evaluation data should strike a balance between quantitative measures and qualitative assessments of program impact"(p. 379). Reporting of numbers of adults served or test results alone cannot give an overall picture of program effectiveness.

Evaluation Practice in Canada

Thomas researched 14 literacy programs across Canada in 1989 and published the results in Exemplary Adult Literacy Programs and Innovative Practices in Canada. Of the 14 programs summarized, three indicated that program evaluation procedures are a part of the literacy program. The program evaluation in two of these 3 programs was described as informal in nature, that is, the program staff and students were invited to give informal feedback regarding the program on a regular basis. One program, English in the Working Environment, identified formal evaluation procedures as occurring at the half-way

point as well as at the end of the program. Evaluation was identified as a "required" component of the program (Thomas, p. 36). The fact that evaluation procedures are not identified as components of the overwhelming majority of the programs surveyed indicates that, if evaluation is conducted at all, it is likely conducted informally through staff and student anecdotes.

Development of Literacy Policy in Canada

The Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) has attempted to address the need for a coordinated literacy policy in Canada through a discussion document, "Organizing Adult Literacy and Basic Education in Canada" (White and Hoddinott, 1991). The MCL has developed its own series of good practice statements relating to the provision of literacy and basic education to adults. These include the following:

1. Programs are developed from a clear set of aims and objectives.
2. Programs are based on a theoretically sound teaching methodology which incorporates the principles of adult education.
3. Programs ensure that students participate in defining their educational goals and in planning for the achievement of those goals.
4. Programs offer students a choice of group instruction, one-to-one instruction or a combination of the two.
5. Programs use procedures for student assessment which are respectful of the students' right to be informed of their progress.
6. Program evaluation guidelines and processes allow for accountability to the students, the organization and the public.
7. Programs select qualified staff and provide initial and on-going staff training.
8. Program facilities are well equipped, comfortable and safe.
9. Programs are offered free of charge in response to demand.

10. Programs are offered at different times during the day and are of sufficient length to enable adults to make measurable progress.
11. Programs are of a common standard that allows students to transfer to other levels of basic education or other post-secondary programs.
12. Programs provide support services for students such as child care and counselling.
13. Programs publicize their services through appropriate means.

(White and Hoddinott, pp.10-11)

This discussion document advocates that provincial and territorial governments acknowledge their responsibility to provide basic education services to adults, pass legislation that will ensure these services will be provided, and establish a lead department or ministry responsible for adult literacy and basic education programming. It is recommended that this ministry develop a plan of action which would include "developing provincial guidelines and standards for the delivery of Adult Literacy and Basic Education" as well as "developing a framework for the evaluation of programs which would determine the extent to which programs comply with standards of good practice and would assess the overall effectiveness of the program" (White and Hoddinott, p. 13).

The document provides a detailed overview of all the components of an adult literacy or adult basic education program with recommendations for each component. It states firmly that programs must receive adequate, stable funding from governments in order to provide quality literacy and basic education programs. Moreover, "Provincial and territorial governments must include Literacy education as a core part of their long-range planning of expenditures" (p. 38).

Two Proposed Evaluation Models

Movement for Canadian Literacy Model

The framework for program evaluation proposed by the Movement for Canadian Literacy is a formal structure with distinct purposes of evaluation for program development and evaluation for accountability. The following characteristics outline the model:

> 1. representation in the evaluation process from all those served by the adult education program.
> 2. annual internal evaluations for the purpose of program development. These annual evaluations are the responsiblity of the program coordinator and should involve staff, students and support staff. The evaluations should be formative but should be an objective look at all aspects of the program.
> 3. external evaluations for the purpose of program development to be conducted every three to five years. External evaluations for the purpose of accountability should be based on accepted standards of good practice.
> 4. all evaluations should use a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures as well as both subjective and objective criteria.
> 5. ongoing budget allocations are necessary and should be provided by the government department responsible for adult basic education.
> (White and Hoddinott, p. 30)

Adult Basic Education Model

Chang Barker (1992) has constructed a model that is intended to be of practical significance to educators working in adult basic education (including literacy programs) in the province of Alberta. She has based her model on the following principles of literacy education:

• literacy competence develops as an ongoing process

• learning is an active, constructive process

• every learner is unique, having individual prior knowledge and current need regarding language, learning and literacy

• literacy empowers (Chang Barker, p.15)

Chang Barker asserts that her framework operates from the philosophy that **"the ongoing development and use of skills and knowledge by individuals is the focus of ABE programs** (her emphasis), more important than the simple acquisition of acceptable skill levels..." (page 15) Following from this, she states that student learning must be measured in more ways than through achievement tests.

The model follows three process steps:

1. Description of the program goals, outcomes and resources
2. Comparison of program outcomes to goals and resources, and a comparison of program efficiency to set standards
3. Judgement of the success or quality of the program.

The first step in this model involves the contributions of what Chang calls the four major stakeholder groups. These are:

1. actual students in the program (in progress, completors and non-completors)
2. program personnel (instructional, administrative and support staff)
3. program funders and hosts (government departments, institutions and businesses)
4. policy makers and the general public (politicians, taxpayers, external support services and potential students) (Chang Barker, p.21).

These stakeholders are encouraged to be involved in creating descriptions of what was intended or anticipated (the program goals), what were the actual

impacts and achievements (the program outcomes), and what resources (time, money, people and materials) were utilized (Chang Barker, p.21).

The second step involves the creation of comparisons in order to determine program effectiveness, efficiency and quality. According to Chang Barker,

> The first comparison is between what was intended and what was achieved, and the result is a measure of effectiveness. The second comparison is between what was achieved and the resources utilized, and the result is a measure of efficiency. The third comparison is between the effectiveness and efficiency of this program and external standards, i.e. either comparative or absolute, in order to determine quality. (Chang Barker, p. 33)

Chang Barker acknowledges the problems associated with comparing programs due to the lack of "peer" evaluations from which to draw standards. She notes that the process of developing standards is currently underway in Canada through the Movement for Canadian Literacy (1991) and at the University of Alberta (Chang Barker, p. 34).

Following these comparisons, then, the final task in program evaluation is to make a judgement of worth. Chang Barker concludes,

> In the judgement process, then the evaluator(s) are looking for demonstration of success, i.e. achievement of most/all goals and achievement of no/few detractors relative to internal, comparative and absolute standards, and excellence, i.e. achievement of optimal effectiveness and efficiency. Bottom line questions: Is this program good enough? Is it excellent? What needs to be improved in this program? What could be changed to promote excellence? (p. 35)

The model described above is, in the author's words, "...a combination of three approaches: the objectives-based, decision-making, and responsive"

(p. 25). The objectives-based model (based on the goal-oriented theories of Popham, 1970) compares the program to set standards and identifies discrepancies between what was achieved and what should have been achieved. The decision-centered model, developed by Stufflebeam (1970), varies according to the timing or the need to make decisions regarding planning, structuring, implementing or recycling a program. Responsive or naturalistic evaluation tends to focus on the perspective of the clients of the program. The focus on student needs is an indication that this model could be used appropriately in the evaluation of adult basic education programs.

There are other aspects of the model which lend themselves well to adult programming; for example, the inclusion of all interested stakeholders in the evaluation process. However, the dominant theme of this model -- efficiency and effectiveness of programs -- leans very much towards the institutional. Cost-benefit analysis is not a concept that fits easily into an informal volunteer tutor program in which benefits of the program to the student are not always easily measured or measureable. While it is important that programs such as these begin to use program evaluation as a means of program improvement and program accountability, there may not be sufficient quantifiable factors involved in a community-based program. Having said that, this model appears to be the best starting point for literacy program evaluation and could be successfully adapted to meet the circumstances of community-based literacy programs.

A Comparison of the two Models

The approaches to program evaluation taken by both the Movement for Canadian Literacy and Chang Barker reflect the need for program evaluation in adult literacy as a way of strengthening the programs through accountability

mechanisms. As noted by Chang Barker (1992, p.34), the MCL model promotes very much the expert-oriented, top-down approach versus the stakeholder emphasis apparent in her model. The MCL discussion document advocates the forming and re-forming of provincial and federal government bureaucracies to give adult literacy programs a permanent place in the policies and budgets of Canadian government. Chang Barker's views are very much tailored to the situation surrounding adult basic education in the province of Alberta: her writing on program evaluation is intended to offer concrete ways that a literacy practitioner can actually attempt a program evaluation that will produce meaningful results.

Literacy Program Standards in Canada

Governments and literacy organizations in Canada have recently been focusing on the establishment of standards applicable to adult basic education and literacy programs. The reasons for this vary from a desire to have literacy achievements recognized (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 1988) to an attempt to address the issue of a national literacy policy (White and Hoddinott, 1991). It is apparent from available research that literacy program development varies considerably across Canada; program evaluation has not become a concern of top priority in all areas of the country.

The Movement for Canadian Literacy has deemed it essential that standards be developed for the provision of literacy education in Canada.

> The setting of standards will provide guidelines for setting up programs and criteria for ongoing program evaluation. Standards of good practice can provide educators and students with a gauge by which to measure the quality and effectiveness of their own programs. They can also be used

> by funders and policy makers to ensure that both new and established Adult Literacy and Basic Education programs meet the conditions which are necessary for high quality education. (MCL, p.8)

Provincial Literacy Standards

There is some reporting in the literature of a lack of standards in provincial literacy programs (Government of Saskatchewan, 1987). The New Brunswick literacy advisory council has recommended a monitoring system with some established procedures for measuring progress (Government of New Brunswick,1991). The suggestion has been made that, in order to facilitate literacy program evaluation, a statistical base must be developed. (Government of British Columbia, 1989). The National Adult Literacy Database was established in 1991 by the Government of Alberta and contains a wide variety of information related to adult literacy initiatives in Canada. The development of a volunteer tutor program evaluation kit by Thomas for the Government of British Columbia (1989) as well as a handbook for the evaluation of Adult Basic Education in Alberta (Chang Barker, 1992) may also prove to be valuable tools for literacy practitioners.

The Government of Alberta, in its "Foundations for Adult Learning and Development Policy" (1991), makes some commitments to provide learning opportunities for adults lacking basic skills. In particular, the policy states that "it will help to ensure appropriate direction, fiscal accountability and program effectiveness of the activities undertaken" (p.3). It further underlies the role of the province in addressing the learning needs of Albertans with limited basic skills is "to assume leadership in initiatives to address issues concerning program coordination, development, monitoring and evaluation" (p.13). To this end, the

Government of Alberta supported the development of Chang Barker's (1992) evaluation model for adult basic education programs described earlier in this chapter.

Although the provincial government has started to offer some leadership with regard to literacy program evaluation, most literacy coordinators in the province have not been provided with sufficient support or background to evaluate programs. Some evaluation is being conducted in the province, but an overall systematic look at evaluation of programs has not been undertaken. The overview of research in the field of literacy program evaluation indicates that little is known regarding the use of evaluation as a basis for program change. Barriers are present which limit the number of programs that engage in program evaluation. There is a need to explore further the issues surrounding program evaluation and the views of literacy coordinators regarding program evaluation in adult literacy programs in Alberta.

Barriers to Program Evaluation

Program barriers were explored in a National Adult Literacy Project (NALP) survey in the United States in 1984 which surveyed 225 literacy programs and attempted to outline "promising practices" in literacy education. The study found five main reasons that programs are not involved in detailed evaluations.

A primary barrier to program evaluation is lack of time to do a thorough evaluation by staff who have many other responsibilities in the program. Programs reported that the immediate needs of students received priority attention over long term needs of collecting data to be analyzed at a later date.

The study found that many of the instructors in literacy programs were part time workers.

The second barrier identified is lack of training. Program staff are generally not trained in evaluation procedures (Crandall et al. 1984). Lerche (1985) suggests that programs could implement more sophisticated evaluation techniques if they initiated two things: first, providing training for staff in program evaluation and second, having expert evaluation services available to literacy staff through a literacy resource centre. Lerche also suggests that staff learn to do by doing. Staff should participate in an introductory structured evaluation exercise. After they have completed an evaluation once, they hopefully would feel confident about adapting evaluation procedures to best suit their program.

Third, program staff often do not see evaluation as relevant to program goals (Lerche, 1985). Those who participated in the NALP study could not see how the evaluation procedures they were using would actually help to identify program strengths (Crandall et al. 1984). This could be overcome, according to Lerche, by fostering a team approach and involving staff in creating evaluation procedures.

A fourth concern of those involved in the NALP study involves the gathering of data. Many programs accepted the notion that records of retention and completion data were effective as measures of program effectiveness. However, many programs attempted to measure beyond the limits of those statistics, to gather more qualitative data. Program staff were frustrated when funding agencies called for quantitative data as the only criteria for program success (Lerche, 1985). Also, Lerche reports "...when that quantifiable data is a count of the students served, programs may be tempted to interpret/report as bodies those students who were only in the program for a short term simply because they need the points generated by reporting high numbers" (p.177).

It can be argued that there is some information that can be gathered only by qualitative means and in anecdotal records. An example of this is the fact that many adult learners report increased self-esteem as a result of their work in a literacy program. This leads to increased confidence and dignity. Although these gains are not easily measured except perhaps through learners' own reports, they are important indicators of the success of a literacy program.

The final reported barrier to program evaluation in the NALP study relates to problems inherent in evaluating education for the type of person often present in a literacy program. These learners are voluntary and often transient. Keeping records and evaluating the results of a program designed for low-literate adults is a major challenge. Lerche says that related to this difficulty is the whole question of defining what success is in a literacy program. For some practitioners, it may be the number of learners involved in the program, while others may judge success simply by helping someone experience the joy of learning.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed much of the current research and literature concerning educational program evaluation and literacy program evaluation. Definitions of program evaluation from several sources were explored, as well as the purposes of program evaluation. An overview of some of the evaluation models developed over the past forty years reveals the many aspects, both differing and overlapping, of evaluation models. The relevance of these models to a volunteer tutor adult literacy program was explored. Current and past reports of literacy program practice were reviewed. This was followed by an overview of literacy program evaluation in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. Finally, barriers to program evaluation reported by the large National Adult Literacy Project survey in the United States were reviewed.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This research project was an exploratory study of the nature and extent of evaluation of adult literacy volunteer tutor programs in Alberta. Literacy coordinators from rural and urban volunteer tutor programs who were members of the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta were asked to complete a questionnaire designed to collect information regarding literacy programs and how they are evaluated. Data from the programs were compared and analyzed.

In this chapter, the criteria by which the participants for the study were chosen and how the data were collected are described. A detailed description of the characteristics of the participants is included in this chapter. The process of developing, piloting and administering the research questionnaire is also described.

Problem Statement

What factors are perceived by literacy coordinators to affect the conduct of various types of program evaluation of adult literacy volunteer tutor programs and the implementation of recommended changes? The following sub-problems provided the focus for the study:

1. Are there differences in the program evaluation procedures currently in use in urban and rural adult literacy volunteer tutor programs in Alberta?

2. What are the determining factors regarding whether or not evaluation is being conducted in adult literacy volunteer tutor programs?

3. Do volunteer literacy programs adjust according to evaluation findings and if so, how?

The Participants

Description of the Participants

Seventy-three literacy coordinators who were members of the LIteracy Coordinators of Alberta (LCA) in 1991 were invited to participate in this research study. The LCA was established in 1986 and exists "to provide support and professional development for the coordinators of volunteer adult literacy programs of Alberta in order to enhance the quality and effectiveness of these programs" (LCA Management Handbook, no date, p.11). The general role of literacy coordinators is described as follows: "Literacy coordinators are charged with the responsibility of the day-to-day management of community-based literacy programs staffed by volunteer tutors" (Report on the Alberta Literacy Inventory, p.63). This day-to-day management encompasses a wide variety of duties. The job description of a literacy coordinator as developed by the LCA and endorsed at their annual general meeting in 1989 includes the following duties:

1. Establish and/or maintain a literacy office and program.
2. Establish public awareness of literacy programs and community outreach.
3. Recruit and interview potential tutors. Orient tutors through tutor training workshops and consistent in-services.
4. Recruit, interview and assess students.
5. Match learner and tutor pairs.
6. Establish and maintain a learner/tutor resource collection.

7. Advise and assist tutor/learner pairs with individual programs and monitor progress.

8. Produce or contribute to project newsletter.

9. Liase with the project's Advisory Committee or Hosting Authority.

10. Organize and/or host volunteer recognition events.

11. Maintain membership in the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta.

12. Assume responsibility for personal professional development through activities such as reading and research, as well as participating in professional development events pertaining to literacy coordinators.

13. Continue contact with community agencies and organizations.

14. Facilitate movement of students to other programs where required.

(Literacy Coordinators of Alberta Management Handbook, no date, p.18)

As a group, literacy coordinators share some unique characteristics. As reported by the Alberta Literacy Inventory Project (1991), they are almost all female, married and between the ages of 30 and 49 years. Over one-half of literacy coordinators in Alberta have a university degree, and 50 per cent have had four years instructional or tutorial experience prior to becoming a literacy coordinator. It is significant to note that, in 1991, 82 per cent of coordinators had been in their position for less than three years and that over three-quarters of coordinators were in part-time positions (Government of Alberta, 1990). These characteristics of literacy coordinators could influence their attitudes towards and ability to conduct literacy program evaluation. Program evaluation can be a daunting task for a part time, inexperienced literacy coordinator. This study attempted to discover the nature of program evaluation and the attitudes of literacy coordinators towards program evaluation in volunteer tutor based programs.

Selection of the Participants

The participants were all members of the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta (LCA) and were chosen from the membership list of the LCA. In order to be eligible for standard membership, the Management Handbook produced by the LCA simply states that an individual must "coordinate a volunteer literacy program" (LCA Management Handbook, no date, p. 10). The LCA also maintains an associate membership policy. This membership is intended to provide an opportunity for former literacy coordinators to maintain contact with the LCA. Associate members were not chosen as participants for this study. The majority of coordinators involved in the study were responsible for their own programs; however, there were some exceptions. There are some literacy programs in Alberta which attempt to deliver literacy services over a large area. Some of these programs have hired assistant coordinators, called "monitors" in some areas, to deliver services within a specified subsection of the delivery area of the literacy program. Because these monitors perform essentially the same duties as a literacy coordinator, they are eligible for full membership in the LCA and are therefore included in the membership list. Some monitors participated in this research survey. As of September, 1991, the total number of coordinators with full membership in the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta was 79. Seventy-three members of the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta were invited to participate in the study.

The Nature of Literacy Programs

Volunteer tutor adult literacy programs focus on a one-to-one learning relationship between a volunteer tutor and an adult student. While larger programs may offer classes with volunteer instructors, this is not usually the case with the majority of volunteer tutor programs in Alberta. These programs have no

set curriculum -- the course of study is determined by the tutor and the student. Skills in reading, writing and numeracy are taught in volunteer tutor programs at various levels (grade range 1 to 7), depending on the level of the student. In contrast, literacy classes sponsored by post-secondary institutions tend to teach literacy skills at higher levels. The literacy tutor in a volunteer tutor program is given an introduction to teaching literacy skills to adults, including suggestions for teaching basic literacy skills. The training period varies considerably in literacy programs in Alberta. Once the training is completed and the tutor is matched with a student, tutors are generally in charge of the program of studies, with input from the learner and support from the literacy coordinator.

Information about literacy coordinators as a group was gathered in 1990 through the Alberta Literacy Inventory Project of Alberta Advanced Education (ALIP). The mandate of the project was to provide the provincial government with a complete overview of literacy activities in Alberta. To this end, the project goals were established as follows:

1. To identify existing literacy programs and resource centers in Alberta.
2. To describe the nature of these programs.
3. To develop a profile of those groups involved in literacy education in Alberta (this included literacy coordinators, literacy instructors, students, tutors, and program administrators in both community-based and institutionally-based literacy programs) (Report on the Alberta Literacy Inventory, 1990, p.7).

The information gathered about literacy programs and the profile developed concerning literacy coordinators through the Alberta Literacy Inventory is significant to this study. Tutor-based literacy programs in the ALIP study were found to be less well-established and to serve a smaller number of students through continuous entry and exit programs than institutional literacy programs. These characteristics of tutor-based programs could have some bearing on the

likelihood of program evaluation being conducted in that a smaller, less well-established literacy program may have concerns relating to program administration which do not include program evaluation.

The Instrument

Construction of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to gather information related to literacy programs, the current status of program evaluation in literacy programs, and literacy coordinators' views regarding the viability of establishing literacy program evaluation policy in Alberta. (The full questionnaire appears in Appendix A.)

The questionnaire was adapted from the work of Thomas (1989) in her book, Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit published by the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training . The seventeen "Good Practice Statements" developed by Thomas form the foundation of the Evaluation Kit. In brief, these statements are concerned with the following program aspects:

A. Philosophy
B. Planning
C. Community Involvement and Linkages
D. Awareness Activities
E. Access
F. Facilities and Equipment
G. Administration
H. Participation
I. Staff Training and Development
J. Tutor Training
K. Volunteer Tutor Support Services
L. Learner Assessment

M. Learner Support Services
N. Instructional Strategies
O. Materials
P. Program Evaluation
Q. Funding

In Section P, program evaluation is described as follows: "A quality literacy program engages in ongoing evaluation to assure program effectiveness and involves learners, tutors, staff and other interested parties in the process" (Thomas, p.7). As mentioned in chapter two, Thomas developed four instruments as part of the program evaluation kit. These included a program questionnaire (to be completed in a participatory manner with program stakeholders), a program profile, a tutor questionnaire and a learner questionnaire. The program questionnaire as well as the tutor questionnaire contain the seventeen good practice statements along with supporting statements. Participants using the program evaluation kit are asked to indicate which of the supporting statements apply to their literacy program. The ten supporting statements in Section P, Program Evaluation, were adapted as part of the instrument in this research project.

Other sources which were consulted regarding literacy program evaluation include current research and literature in the field of program evaluation and evaluation of adult literacy volunteer tutor projects, questionnaires and surveys used by literacy programs to evaluate themselves. The research provided a background and a starting point for the study. The questionnaires used by other literacy programs provided ideas for questionnaire items.

The data were collected with a 37-item survey that contained questions of both structured and unstructured formats. The majority of the questions required respondents to check the most appropriate answers with provision given in most

items to include answers appropriate for their program. This was done by including a category called "Other" followed by a space for respondents to add relevant information. Six questions were open-ended.

Questionnaire items 1 through 4 were designed to gather demographic information relating to the literacy program and job-related information concerning the literacy coordinator. Respondents were asked to indicate in questions 1 and 2 if their literacy program was located in an urban or rural area, and the approximate size (i.e., the number of learners) in their program. Questions 3 and 4 asked respondents to indicate their employment status and their length of employment as a literacy coordinator.

The next three questions were related to program funding. Respondents were asked to indicate all sources of funding from a supplied list of eight possible choices. Respondents were also given an opportunity to indicate other funding sources that were not listed on the instrument. Because literacy programs often receive support other than financial from various sources, the next two questions asked respondents if they received support "in kind" and, if so, the type and source of support received.

In the next three questions (8-10), information was sought regarding the issue of program advisory boards in literacy programs. In the first question regarding advisory boards, respondents were asked to indicate if their literacy program operated with an advisory board and if so, the number of board members. The second question asked for an indication of the organizations represented by the members of the advisory board. The third question asked respondents to indicate the major issues of concern for their advisory board. The question included four possible example answers.

The final question in this section of the questionnaire was open-ended. Literacy coordinators were asked to briefly explain what program evaluation, as applied to an adult literacy program, meant to them.

Question 12 in the instrument is a crucial one because it divided, by response, the coordinators who reported that formal evaluation was a part of their literacy program from those who indicated the opposite. Those who responded positively were directed to answer questions 13 through 17; the remainder were asked to answer questions 18 and 19.

The section of the questionnaire designated for coordinators who participate in program evaluation is discussed first. The first three questions in this section attempted to gather data that relates to:

a) the person responsible for conducting program evaluation

b) the people whose opinions were solicited in the evaluation process, and

c) the reason or reasons why program evaluation was conducted.

Each of these questions offered a choice of answers; respondents were asked to check as many answers as applied in their case. Each question also featured a category labeled "other" which gave respondents an opportunity to contribute relevant information.

Respondents were next asked to rate certain statements relating to program evaluation on a three-point scale, indicating the degree to which each statement applied to their particular literacy program. The ten statements included in the rating question were adapted from Thomas' Adult Literacy Volunteer Tutor Program Evaluation Kit (1990). The final item in this section was an open-ended question. Here information was sought regarding the kinds of adjustments that may have been made to literacy programs on the basis of program evaluation results.

In the section directed to coordinators who reported that they did not engage in formal program evaluation, respondents were asked to answer two questions. First, could they identify possible barriers to conducting program evaluation and second, would they be interested in including program evaluation as a part of their program? The second question included an open-ended component asking coordinators to give reasons for their answer.

Questions twenty to twenty-four of the survey were to be answered by all respondents, whether or not they conducted or were involved with literacy program evaluation. Five questions in this section were concerned with informal feedback as opposed to formal program evaluation. Respondents were asked if they gathered informal feedback about their program and what sources provided that feedback. The remaining three questions dealt with changes made as a result of informal feedback. First of all, respondents were asked if informal feedback had led them to make program changes. In the second question, coordinators were asked to indicate the types of changes that had been made. The third question in this section was an open-ended question which sought coordinator's opinions on how the effectiveness of program changes based on informal feedback were measured.

Questions twenty-five to twenty-seven in the survey dealt with planning program evaluation and introduced the concept of a program evaluation policy for literacy programs in Alberta. In the first question in this final section, coordinators were asked to indicate those individuals or groups who they thought should be involved in planning program evaluation. The second and third question dealt with the issue of program evaluation policy: should such a policy be developed for literacy programs funded by the provincial department of Advanced Education, and if a policy were to be developed, who would coordinators like to see as participants in that process?

The final question in the instrument was an open-ended item inviting coordinators to include any other information regarding program evaluation.

Piloting the Questionnaire

The researcher contacted four colleagues who are coordinators of adult literacy volunteer tutor programs in Alberta to obtain their consent to serve as subjects in a pilot version of the survey. These four coordinators were contacted by telephone in August, 1991. In order to reflect the varied nature of literacy programs throughout Alberta, two representatives were chosen from urban and two from rural literacy programs. The coordinators involved in the questionnaire pilot were from both large and medium-sized literacy programs. The participants in the pilot were asked to complete the questionnaire and to give their thoughts on the clarity and appropriateness of the items. Questionnaires were mailed or faxed to the pilot coordinators in September of 1991. The pilot questionnaires were returned in October. The researcher spoke to each coordinator by telephone after the pilot questionnaires were received to clarify their responses and give coordinators the opportunity to add additional information.

Minor revisions were made based on the recommendations of these coordinators. Revisions included the following:

a) question 4 initially offered four categories of response: an additional category of "less than 6 months" was added.

b) more space was added for respondent comments in question 18.

c) added to question 8 was a question asking how many people were part of the literacy advisory board.

d) an error in the numbering of questions was corrected.

e) page five of the questionnaire, a blank page added to accommodate additional responses from coordinators, was deleted.

f) in question number 6, the term "support in kind" was not clearly understood. An attempt was made to clarify this term through question 7, which listed examples of support in kind.

In view of the fact that there were no substantive revisions in the survey questionnaire following the pilot process, and because the revisions did not alter the responses given by the pilot coordinators, data from those who piloted the questionnaire were included in the data analysis of the revised questionnaire.

Data Collection

Survey questionnaires with covering letters (see Appendix B) were mailed by the researcher to 73 literacy coordinators listed as standard members of the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta at the beginning of November 1991. 47 were returned by the beginning of December 1991. Follow-up telephone calls were made by the researcher in January of 1992 to encourage coordinators who had not done so to complete and return their questionnaires. A total of 62 questionnaires were returned by the end of January 1992 for a return rate of 85 per cent.

Every effort was made to ensure that confidentiality of responses was maintained. In the covering letter that accompanied the questionnaire, literacy coordinators were informed of the volunteer nature of their participation and were given the opportunity to opt out of the study at any time. The nature and purpose of the research was also explained in the covering letter to all participants. (See Appendix B.)

The information released from this survey will not identify any one particular literacy program.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSx, 1983). The following statistical procedures were used:

1. Frequencies of responses. Frequency tables were produced in order to analyze those items on the instrument that were quantitative in nature.

2. Cross-tabulations of rural and urban programs as related to the types of evaluation conducted.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reporting of Survey Results

Introduction

Seventy-three literacy coordinators who were members of the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta were asked to complete a survey questionnaire regarding adult literacy program evaluation. Sixty-two members completed and returned the questionnaire. The results and discussion of information from the survey are presented in this chapter. Reporting of the data will follow the questionnaire format. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSx). The following statistical procedures were used:

1. frequency tables
2. cross-tabulations of the program location as related to the status of program evaluation and Chi square statistics:
   a) who is responsible for conducting program evaluation
   b) whose opinions are solicited in the evaluation process
   c) determining factors as to whether or not program evaluation is conducted.
   d) steps followed in literacy program evaluation

Demographic and Employment Information

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to gather information related to program location and size as well as information about the employment status of the coordinator (part-time or full-time) and the coordinator's length of

employment. Questionnaires were mailed to 34 urban and 39 rural literacy coordinators. There was a higher response from rural programs (95%) than from urban (74%). In terms of program size, 53 % of programs have less than 20 students; 34% have between 20 and 40 students and 13% of coordinators reported over 40 students in the literacy program. In response to the question regarding employment status, 82% of the respondents indicated that they were part-time workers; 18% considered their positions to be full-time. The highest percentage of respondents in the study (33%) have worked from two to four years as literacy coordinators. The next largest number (29%) have worked for less than one year. A smaller number of respondents (14%) have worked as literacy coordinators for over four years.

These findings are consistent with information gathered by the government of Alberta through the Alberta Literacy Inventory Project (ALIP) (1990). ALIP was designed to gather information on literacy workers, literacy students and literacy programs in the province of Alberta. The data gathered through the ALIP revealed that 79% of coordinators were employed in part-time positions and that 82% of coordinators had been in their present position for less than 3 years. The data gathered through the ALIP with regards to program size is also consistent with the information gathered in the survey under discussion, i.e., 69% of tutor programs surveyed through the ALIP reported having fewer than 20 tutors working with learners and 7% indicate more than 60 tutors (Alberta Literacy Inventory Project, 1990, p.5).

Literacy Program Funding

The second major theme in items 5 through 7 of the questionnaire dealt with issues relating to program funding and the nature of literacy program

advisory boards. Sources of funding and types of additional support for programs were examined in this section. As shown in Table 1, the majority of coordinators (82%) reported that their program received funding support from the Community Programs Branch of Alberta Advanced Education.

Table 1

Summary of Funding Sources

	Programs	
Source	N	%
Alberta Advanced Education	51	82.3
Further Education Council	25	40.3
Service Clubs	17	27.4
Private donations	12	19.4
Wild Rose Foundation	5	8.1
United Way	2	3.2
School Board	1	1.6
Other	21	33.9

There are two factors which may account for the remainder of coordinators (18%) who indicated that their programs did not receive funding from Alberta Advanced Education. In many cases, funds received from Alberta Advanced Education through the host institution or college are allocated to literacy programs. This could be described as an indirect funding of literacy programs by Alberta Advanced Education. Also, many coordinators who responded that their main funding source was their Further Education Council may not be aware that Alberta Advanced Education directs most of the funds allocated to literacy programs through the provincial Further Education Councils. The respondents indicated funding support also came from business and industry, other government grants (National Literacy Secretariat, Canada/Alberta Northern

Development Agreement, National Literacy Partnership Strategy), libraries, colleges, the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta, the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy, Family and Community Support Services, and the City of Edmonton.

Literacy Program Advisory Boards

Coordinators were asked to respond to questions regarding literacy program advisory boards. A fairly large majority of literacy programs represented in this survey (74%) work with an advisory board and most boards have between seven and ten people as members. Table 2 indicates the reported representation of advisory board members to literacy programs.

Table 2

Reported Representation of Literacy Program Advisory Boards

	Programs	
Representative	N	%
Further Education Council	39	62.9%
Community	38	61.3%
Tutors	31	50.0%
School Board	18	29.0%
Learners	16	25.8%
Other	17	27.4%

Literacy advisory board representation in the "other" category was diverse, including representatives from a government agency (Family and Social Services) as well as a myriad of community agencies (ministerial associations, rehabilitation societies, women's shelters, local health units, local chambers of commerce, libraries, Family and Community Support Services, and local

newspapers) and institutional support (Alberta Vocational College, a college student council, the hosting agency's executive staff). This broad range of community involvement with literacy programs through advisory boards suggests that those programs who work with advisory boards may have the potential for more success in determining and meeting the needs of the communities they work in, as well as developing partnerships which could benefit the literacy program.

An open-ended question regarding advisory boards asked respondents to indicate the primary issues of concern that their advisory boards deal with on a regular basis. The responses show that, while advisory boards address many issues related to literacy programs, some concerns seem to be dealt with more often than others. The largest group of responses indicated that advisory boards consider program issues most often (51 responses). This large category includes a concern with program awareness in the community (15 responses), as well as concerns with program planning, development and delivery. One respondent indicated that the advisory board was concerned with program evaluation.

The second largest category of issues involves concerns with funding. Some specific concerns dealt with general funding issues (14 responses), as well as fund-raising and budget issues. A small number of boards deal with issues regarding literacy students and volunteers (7 responses). Four coordinators report that tutor training is a concern for their advisory board, and other responses included concerns about networking for students and volunteers, meeting student needs and volunteer recruitment. Coordinators reported that there is some concern about community issues on literacy advisory boards (6 responses). An equal number of responses indicated that the advisory board dealt with issues relating to the literacy coordinator. Most responses in this category indicated that the board acted as a support for the coordinator (3

responses). Other boards were reported to be concerned about the coordinator's job description or the job performance of the coordinator. Seventeen respondents did not answer this question. Of those seventeen, twelve reported that their program did not have an advisory board.

Program Evaluation Defined

In response to an open-ended question, literacy coordinators were asked to give a personal definition of literacy program evaluation. The main ideas have been categorized according to key words in the responses. Although there is some overlap in responses, the intent of the responses was considered and the researcher attempted to group all responses in an appropriate manner. The largest number of coordinators believe that program evaluation is about program effectiveness (12 respondents). Those respondents whose comments fit into this category seem to see program effectiveness as an overall vision of how the literacy program is working. This includes input from everyone involved with the program and, according to the respondents, is inter-related with setting program goals.

Others state that program evaluation should be concerned with meeting needs (11 respondents). In this category, needs were identified as the needs of those in the literacy program (students and tutors) as well as the needs of the community. The remainder of responses described evaluation as an assessment of a program (11 respondents), or a means of meeting program goals (9 respondents). Ten individuals responded with comments that do not fall into any of the above categories. These included coordinator beliefs that although evaluation is mainly about programs -- evaluating program strengths and weaknesses in all areas, evaluating the quality of tutor training and program

advertising, supporting tutors, using effective resources, establishing partnerships -- program evaluation is seen as being concerned with how the program is perceived by others. Two respondents gave their very personal views of program evaluation. One respondent replied that program evaluation is defined as "stress -- a lot of work"; another saw the program coordinator as the center of evaluation. Eight individuals chose not to answer this question.

When literacy coordinators were asked to indicate whether or not formal program evaluation was currently part of their literacy program, there was a nearly even split in the responses. Thirty-two respondents, or 51% of all respondents, indicated that they do conduct formal program evaluation. It should be noted that two people who responded in the affirmative to this question had not actually conducted program evaluation. However, they stated that program evaluation was planned in the near future for their program, and they answered all questions accordingly. Their responses were therefore included. The number of coordinators responding positively to this question is an indication that coordinators believe in the importance of program evaluation, despite barriers such as part-time hours and lack of training in conducting evaluation.

The questionnaire then branched off in two directions. Respondents were asked to answer different sections of the questionnaire depending on whether or not program evaluation had been a part of their literacy program. The responsibility for conducting program evaluation, for the most part, falls on the literacy coordinator, according to 68% of the respondents who answered this section of the questionnaire. As shown in Table 3, others responsible include advisory board members (26%) and the agency or institution sponsoring the program (23%).

Table 3

Who is responsible for conducting literacy program evaluation?

	N	%
Literacy Coordinator	21	67.7%
Literacy Board Members	8	25.8%
Sponsoring Agency	7	22.6%
Other	7	22.6%

Respondents identified a number of groups whose opinions were solicited in the evaluation process. The main categories included tutors (74%), students and board members (68%), the sponsoring agency (55%), other literacy coordinators (52%) and community members (26%). Other respondents included groups such as Adult Basic Education coordinators and instructors as well as institutional and agency representatives.

In terms of the requirements necessary for program evaluation to take place, 52% of respondents indicated that program evaluation takes place because of board policy. Another 39% responded that evaluation was a requirement of their funding agency. Finally, 35% reported that program evaluation takes place in accordance with the policy of the sponsoring institution, upon the request of the coordinator or "whenever it is necessary."

Reported characteristics of program evaluation

The following question in this section of the survey asked coordinators to indicate, on a three point scale, the degree to which 10 various characteristics of program evaluation were present in the type of evaluation that was conducted in their program. Respondents were asked to rate these characteristics as "Never," "Sometimes," or "Always" according to the degree in which they were present in

literacy program evaluation. Table 4 reports the frequency distributions from this question.

Table 4

Characteristics of formal program evaluation in literacy programs

N=29	Never %	Sometimes %	Always %
Characteristics			
A. Learner goals are assessed.	3.4%	37.9%	58.6%
B. There is an awareness of learner progress after leaving.	10.3%	65.5%	24.1%
C. There is an awareness of reasons for dropouts.	6.9%	44.8%	48.3%
D. Students' opinions are sought.	3.3%	30.0%	66.7%
E. Information is gathered about tutors' performance.	14.3%	32.1%	53.6%
F. Information is gathered about tutors' willingness to continue.	6.9%	10.3%	82.8%
G. Tutors' opinions are sought.	3.4%	27.6%	69.0%
H. An annual report is produced and distributed.	13.3%	20.0%	66.7%
I. Planning priorities are based on evaluation results.	3.4%	13.8%	82.8%
J. Plans are made to implement the priorities.	6.7%	16.7%	76.7%

Rural and urban literacy program evaluation

To compare the rural and urban experience of program evaluation, cross-tabulations were conducted on all questions answered by those coordinators who reported participating in program evaluation. Chi square analyses indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between rural and urban programs on the ten program characteristics described in the previous section.

Program Changes

The final question in this section of the questionnaire was open-ended; it asked coordinators what kinds of adjustments had been made in the past in response to evaluation findings. The responses and percentages fell into three categories: program changes (63%), public awareness changes (22%), and staff changes (9%). Within the program changes category, modifications were made most often in tutor training, method of program delivery, upgrading of resources and establishment of student sessions or support groups. Program location was found to affect one type of program change. Chi square analysis indicated a statistically significant number of urban programs altered tutor training as a result of program evaluation ($X^2 = 4.24$, $p < .04$). Changes were also reported in program content, development of goals and objectives, more funds and more time for professional development (one response in each category).

Public awareness changes was the next largest reported category (22%). These responses included improved public awareness campaigns, improved advertising, more public speaking and community involvement. Staff changes were also reported as a result of program evaluation findings (9%). These

changes involved extending coordinator hours, increasing clerical hours and hiring additional part-time staff.

Barriers to program evaluation

Those coordinators who do not conduct, or do not currently participate in program evaluation were asked to indicate the reason or reasons why they felt program evaluation was not being conducted in their literacy program. The largest number of responses indicated that limited time is a factor (31%), as well as lack of training (24%). Other reported barriers to program evaluation included the fact that program evaluation is not required (24%), uncertainty as to the benefits of program evaluation (10%), and a disinterest in program evaluation (2%). Some respondents also expressed confusion over who was responsible for evaluation. A lack of clear guidelines in this area was a concern. Some coordinators felt that they themselves would be evaluated (as well as the program) and "found lacking." More than one respondent indicated that, although formal evaluation was not being done, annual reports were compiled on the basis of informal evaluation.

Of the 31 respondents who were not currently involved in program evaluation (exactly half the sample), 22 indicated that they would like to see formal program evaluation as part of their literacy program. Four respondents were not interested in program evaluation and three were unsure as to the usefulness of a formal evaluation.

As indicated by their responses, an overwhelming majority (93%) of literacy coordinators gather some type of informal information about their program. The sources of informal feedback include tutors (in 92% of cases), students (89%), community (52%), the program sponsor (29%) and other sources

(29%), including a Further Education Council, fellow literacy coordinators, instructors and supervisors in the program and related agencies.

A majority of coordinators (77%) indicate that they make program changes based on the informal feedback they receive. The types of changes include new program learning materials (in 68% of cases), different tutor training techniques (55%), new recruitment policies (34%) and other changes (27%). Eighteen respondents listed other changes that had been made in their program as a result of informal feedback. These changes dealt with areas of tutor and student support, program promotion and expansion, and increased efforts to improve public awareness of literacy programs and adult literacy in general.

In terms of planning program evaluation, the largest number of respondents believe that literacy coordinators should be involved (90%). As outlined in Table 5, respondents also strongly feel that tutors, students and board members should be involved in the planning process.

Table 5

Who should be involved in planning program evaluation in literacy programs?

	Responses	
Involved groups	N	%
Literacy coordinators	56	90.3%
Tutors	51	82.3%
Students	49	79.0%
Board members	40	64.5%
Sponsoring agency	27	43.5%
External "expert"	16	25.8%
Other (community,institution, service agencies involved with clientele)	3	4.8%

Evaluation policy in Alberta

The final structured questions in the questionnaire were concerned with policy development for the evaluation of literacy programs. Respondents were asked, first, was the development of such a policy a good idea and second, if a policy were to be established, who should participate in its development? Exactly one half of the respondents indicated that they agreed with development of a policy; other respondents disagreed (24%), were unsure (13%) or did not answer the question (13%). In response to the second question regarding participation in establishing policy, respondents strongly favored the participation of literacy coordinators (87%), the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta (84%), literacy tutors (73%) and students (71%). Somewhat less strongly favored was the participation of Alberta Advanced Education (65%) and literacy board members (61%). Other suggestions for participants included representation from the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy and community members, including business and industry.

Coordinator Comments

The final open-ended question in the survey asked respondents for general comments regarding literacy program evaluation. Twenty-one coordinators expressed their opinions. A small number of respondents saw evaluation as clearly positive (4 responses), as reflected by comments such as these:

> I think program evaluation is a 'good' and necessary thing if it is done in a cooperative and nonconfrontational way. It can provide much information for improving the quality of literacy programs

> I see evaluation as a very positive event and if conducted regularly is most helpful in retaining students and tutors and being able to deliver the kind of service that Canadians need.

On the other hand, an equal number of coordinators felt that a formal evaluation was not desirable or possible, especially in smaller programs. This view was expressed through comments such as the following:

> Formal evaluation is a bureaucratic time-waster for small, rural programs. Less money should be spent on the 'bureaucratic paper bog' and more on reality: i.e. materials and tutors and coordinator training.

Concerns about funding were voiced by several coordinators. These respondents were not only concerned about adequate funding for literacy program evaluation. The entire issue of government funding for literacy programs and how this funding could be connected to program evaluation was also brought forward, as this comment shows:

> I think that the LCA programs are too diverse a group to institute formal government evaluation. Again, I feel that most of what we do is not easily measured by yes, no's! In some ways I think we would be doing some programs a disservice to evaluate them especially if we are going to end up comparing large institutional programs to smaller rural ones. If the government were to be involved I can't help but think that comparisons would happen -- maybe funding would be cutback to those not doing as well on the evaluation etc.

The lack of time and training available to conduct program evaluation were re-emphasized as being obstacles to conducting evaluations:

> "Programs do not have 'time' or 'funds' to evaluate too much"
>
> ".....program evaluation is important, but finding the time is next to

impossible"

"I don't think there is enough evaluation done. Once again, I know the reason for this is lack of time".

Summary and Conclusions

The results of this exploratory study into the nature of literacy program evaluation as perceived by literacy coordinators yielded the following results: there appear to be no significant differences in the ways that urban and rural literacy programs undertake program evaluation. The determining factors regarding whether or not evaluation is conducted relate to whether or not evaluation is required by the program funder, advisory board or sponsoring institution. Coordinators who do not participate in evaluation report that limited time, limited training and the fact that evaluation is not required are three factors that inhibit program assessment. Those volunteer tutor literacy programs that engage in program evaluation do respond to evaluation findings. Coordinators report that program changes, public awareness changes and staff changes result from evaluation findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary, Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter provides a summary of the study and a discussion of the findings presented in chapter four. Recommendations for future research in the area of adult literacy program evaluation are made.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to undertake an exploratory study that would describe the nature of volunteer tutor literacy program evaluation as described by literacy coordinators. A survey questionnaire was designed to gather information about these Alberta literacy programs, the current status of program evaluation in literacy programs, and the coordinators' views regarding the viability of establishing literacy program evaluation policy in Alberta. (The full questionnaire appears in Appendix A.) The survey questionnaire was mailed to 73 literacy coordinators who were full members of the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta. Sixty-two coordinators completed the questionnaire.

The 37-item questionnaire survey contained questions of both a structured and an unstructured format. The data were analyzed statistically to determine frequencies, means and cross-tabulations. Specifically, the relationship between program location (urban/rural) and various elements of program evaluation was explored.

Discussion of Research Findings

Program location and evaluation practice

The first research question guiding the study related to how program evaluation is conducted in rural and urban literacy programs. The survey was designed to discover whether or not program location was a factor in determining the type of program evaluation conducted. The original hypothesis was that program location influences whether or not evaluation is conducted and also the type of evaluation conducted. It was theorized that larger urban literacy programs would be more likely to conduct evaluation using formal, systematic methods; smaller rural programs were thought to rely more on anecdotal information as an indicator of program success. Larger budgets and more staff in larger urban programs could indicate more support for conducting evaluation, that is, urban programs are more likely than rural ones to have the monetary and administrative support necessary to undertake evaluation.

However, the results of this survey indicated that exactly one-half of rural programs and slightly under one-half of urban programs conduct evaluation. A chi-square analysis indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the extent to which urban and rural programs conducted evaluations.

Characteristics of literacy program evaluation

Informal evaluation plays a more significant role in the assessment of literacy programs than formal evaluation. As reported in Chapter 4, an overwhelming majority (94%) of literacy coordinators gather some type of

informal information about their program. The sources of informal feedback include tutors, students, the community, and the program sponsor.

Over half of the coordinators who conduct formal evaluation indicated that the following characteristics were always part of their program evaluation:

• Evaluation results led to the establishment of planning priorities and the adjustment of activities to implement changes. These results contradict the view that most formal program evaluations are useless and evaluation results are often unused (Forest, 1976).

• A variety of sources provide input, including tutors, students, community members, funders and other literacy coordinators. Tutor opinions are sought by 37% of the programs that conduct evaluation. Tutors are an important source of information to program evaluators. As the link between the coordinator and the student, tutors are able to report student progress (on various levels) on a regular basis. Student comments are also important indicators of program effectiveness, according to coordinators who were surveyed. However, student comments may be affected by the reluctance of students to appear dissatisfied with the program or their progress. Fewer (13%) programs consult community members.

• An annual report is produced and distributed. Those coordinators who are involved in evaluation are interested in making the results known to stakeholders.

• Learner goals are assessed.

• Information is gathered about tutors' performance and tutors' willingness to continue.

The following characteristics were reported as **not** being a part of program evaluation by coordinators who conduct evaluation studies:

• Information is gathered about tutors' performance and willingness to continue. One reason why information is not gathered about tutor performance may be that coordinators find it difficult to obtain candid student opinions about their tutors.

Certainly, many coordinators would find it difficult to find the time to work personally with the tutors in their program or to attend tutoring sessions to assess tutor performance. Many coordinators rely on the tutors themselves to indicate whether or not they are willing to continue. One reason why tutor performance is not considered in evaluation could be because of a lack of tutors. If tutors are hard to find, it is likely that all tutors, regardless of effectiveness, would be welcomed in the program.

• An annual report is produced and distributed. This may not be part of evaluation procedure due to the amount of time available for program evaluation. The wording of the question on the survey questionnaire may also have influenced coordinator reponse; for example, an annual report may be produced but not necessarily distributed.

• Coordinators are aware of the reasons for dropouts as well as learner progress after leaving. The difficulties encountered when students are monitored after leaving the program are related to the often transient nature of the students themselves as well as the limited time and resources to do so.

These findings have several implications. The fact that about one half of the coordinators who answered this survey indicated that they do conduct program evaluation could be interpreted to mean that literacy coordinators are convinced of the importance of program evaluation. This is a more striking finding when the working conditions of coordinators are considered. A large majority (82%) of coordinators who participated in the survey are part-time workers with two to four years' job experience. Literacy coordinators are often stretched to fulfil the wide variety of duties assigned to the position of coordinator, and many coordinators work unpaid hours in order to meet the needs of the tutors and students in the program. By necessity, then, most coordinators must deal with many short-term, immediate needs. Yet their interest in program

effectiveness evidently leads many coordinators to attempt some form of program assessment.

Opinions of significant others

Respondents identified a number of groups whose opinions were solicited in the evaluation process. Literacy coordinators most often ask the opinions of tutors, students and board members. Other groups which are consulted include the sponsoring agency, other literacy coordinators and community members. The involvement of various stakeholder groups in the feedback process suggests that coordinators are interested in an objective view of program effectiveness that does not focus on any one aspect of the program. As evidenced by the research findings, a majority of coordinators are also convinced of the importance of the views of students and tutors involved in the program.

Factors Affecting Evaluation

The survey questionnaire also sought information from coordinators regarding the factors which determine whether or not evaluation is being conducted in adult literacy programs. Respondents report that program evaluation is required in most programs as a policy of the advisory board, the funder, or the sponsoring institution. It should be noted that several respondents indicated that they considered the demographic information required by the Community Programs Branch to be program evaluation.

Barriers to program evaluation

Those coordinators who do not conduct, or do not currently participate in formal program evaluation (approximately 30 coordinators) were asked to indicate the reason or reasons why they felt program evaluation was not a part of their literacy program. The largest number of responses indicated that limited time is a factor, as well as lack of training. Other reported barriers to program evaluation included the fact that program evaluation is not required, a lack of certainty as to the benefits of program evaluation, and a lack of interest in program evaluation.

The reporting of limited time available to conduct evaluations is consistent with the survey data that indicate the majority of literacy coordinators are part-time workers. Coordinators also have limited time for evaluation due to their job responsibilities. These can include everything from office management, volunteer training and support and student assessment and support to community liaison and program promotion (LCA Management Handbook, n.d.). The limited time factor has been reported in the research literature as an important consideration which affects the extent to which evaluation is carried out in literacy programs (Lerche, 1985; Knudson-Fields, 1988).

> Some responses to the questionnaire echo this concern:
> "I don't think there is enough evaluation done. Once again, I know the reason for this is lack of time."
> "As you mentioned in your covering letter, program evaluation is important but finding the time is next to impossible."
> "Evaluation should not be very time consuming as most literacy coordinators work part-time in what should be full-time positions."

Lack of training is another barrier that literacy coordinators in Alberta identified as affecting whether or not they conduct evaluation. As mentioned by

one respondent in this survey, "It must be remembered we are in essence paid volunteers, as most of us are not highly trained (at least we weren't before we began)." This is supported in the literature by Lerche (1985) who reported that program staff are generally not trained in evaluation procedures. One of his recommendations concerns more in-service opportunities for literacy program workers.

If training for literacy coordinators in program evaluation procedures is to become a reality, funds must be provided for this purpose. As the major funder of adult literacy programs in the province, and as the authors of the guidelines set out in the Adult Learning and Development Policy, the Government of Alberta has a responsibility to provide this professional development to coordinators.

Another finding of this study revealed that some literacy coordinators expressed a lack of certainty as to the benefits of program evaluation:

> "Formal evaluation is a bureaucratic time-waster for small, rural programs. Less money should be spent on the 'bureaucratic paper bog' and more on reality: i.e. materials and tutors and coordinator training."

Coordinators' lack of commitment to program evaluation was also identified in the National Adult Literacy Project (1985) findings. In that study, respondents reported that program staff were unconvinced that actually conducting program evaluation would indicate program strengths and weaknesses. This attitude perhaps reflects a lack of awareness of how evaluation can positively affect a program. If coordinators do not fully understand the possible impact of an evaluation on their program, they may be less committed to undertake a program evaluation.

Comparatively few coordinators reported that they were not interested in program evaluation at all. Those who indicated a lack of interest may simply be

speaking from the point of view of a coordinator who has no time or training to conduct program evaluation and who perhaps also has had no information on program evaluation as a means of program improvement.

Program Response to Evaluation

The question, "Do volunteer literacy programs adjust according to evaluation findings and if so, how?" was asked of all coordinators, including those who evaluate based on informal or anecdotal information. The largest number of reported changes made in response to evaluation findings were program changes. Within this general category, changes were made most often in tutor training, method of program delivery, upgrading of resources and establishment of student sessions or support groups. Changes were also reported in program content, development of goals and objectives, more funds and more time for professional development. Public awareness changes were the next largest reported category. These responses included improved public awareness campaigns, improved advertising, more public speaking and community involvement. Staff changes were also reported as a result of program evaluation findings. These changes involved extending coordinator hours, increasing clerical hours and hiring additional part-time staff.

Program Evaluation Defined

Literacy coordinators who participated in this survey define program evaluation as a combination of many elements. These include program effectiveness, meeting needs of students and the community, and meeting program goals and objectives. Coordinators appear to see program evaluation in

general terms. At the outset it was expected that student progress would be central to the evaluation process, but in fact, there were very few responses that included specific reference to student outcomes. Coordinators apparently consider the needs of students, tutors and the community as equally important parts of program evaluation. This view is not shared by all writers in the field of literacy program evaluation. As Chang Barker (1992) notes,

> It is important to remember that **the program system exists to serve a purpose** (original emphasis): the achievement of positive student outcomes. Anything else is peripheral; anything less is failure. (p.7)

Researchers who conducted reviews of literacy programs to isolate the characteristics of effective programs concur that successful programs were adept at recruiting students, convincing them they could succeed, and fostering academic achievement in students (Balmuth,1986; Bear et al., 1987; Padak and Padak, 1991).

Conclusions

This study focused on the current state of program evaluation as seen through the eyes of literacy coordinators of volunteer tutor literacy programs in Alberta. Formal program evaluation is conducted in approximately half of the literacy programs whose coordinators participated in this study. Many of these coordinators feel that program evaluation is a good thing, but most have no previous experience in program evaluation. In addition, literacy coordinators receive no training in program evaluation even though 68% of those who conduct evaluations report that the responsibility for program evaluation rests with the literacy coordinator.

I have concluded from this study that many literacy coordinators are convinced of the importance of gathering data which gives them some ideas as to how their program is received by tutors, students, funders and the communities which they serve. Coordinators prefer to gather program information through informal, anecdotal methods, although half of the coordinators in this study also go through a more formal process of program evaluation. Collecting information informally may be the best that coordinators can presently manage, given the time constraints of the literacy coordinator position and the fact that many coordinators have no training in evaluation procedures. However, because of their willingness to collect informal data, it is anticipated that coordinators would also respond favorably to conducting more systematic program evaluations if the identified barriers could be overcome.

This predisposition of coordinators to gather data about the effectiveness of their programs should be encouraged through increased professional development and the provision of resources that would enable coordinators to fully participate in systematic evaluation procedures. Systematic evaluation can help programs to establish areas of strength as well as areas which need to be strengthened. It can more fully help programs to determine if they are indeed meeting the needs of students, tutors, funders and community members.

Implications from the Study

One implication which arises from these data relates to professional development. At present, literacy coordinators are not provided with training in evaluating program effectiveness. Coordinators funded by the Community Programs Branch of Alberta Advanced Education are required to submit an annual participation summary. This summary includes information concerning

the number of students and tutors in the program, the hours of participation of students and tutors, as well as detailed summaries of both tutor and student participation (e.g., participant inquiries, the number of students and tutors who were active and inactive, the number who withdrew, the number of participants who were new to the program and the number who had returned). These annual reports focus on figures, rather than results or the direct impact of the literacy program.

Those coordinators who conduct systematic evaluation are likely receiving a fairly comprehensive view of the effectiveness of their literacy program. For example, there may be standard questions that are asked of all students in the program. However, those who gather anecdotal information may be receiving a biased view of their program. They may only be hearing negative comments (or only positive ones) from those who are participating in the program, or, on the other hand, they may not be receiving critical comments from students who may feel that such comments could jeopardize their relationship with their tutors or with the program coordinator.

On the basis of the reported data, the number of coordinators who conduct formal evaluation looks very encouraging. It may be, however, that coordinators have very individual notions of what constitutes formal program evaluation. One respondent, in replying to a question regarding participation in establishing a provincial evaluation policy, notes that (in reference to Alberta Advanced Education), "This group already does formal evaluation because of the annual year end stats report we must do to justify funding and write our financial "wish list." In fact, the forms (which Alberta Advanced Education requires coordinators to complete) record basic information only, such as the number of tutors and students involved in the program in one year, how program participants became aware of the program, and the number of students and tutors who left the

program in a one year period. These numbers may give some indication of community involvement in the program but they do not, at all, constitute a systematic program evaluation. If a number of coordinators feel that they are participating in program evaluation through the completion of these forms, some doubt emerges about other data collected in this survey. Coordinators may have scant knowledge about what exactly constitutes program evaluation. This situation was summed up by Crandall (1984): "What programs lack, however, is an overall sense of what evaluation really is and what it can do for them" (p.269).

A critical issue involves the very large number of coordinators in this survey who do not include student outcomes as paramount in their consideration of program success. While some responses indicated that program success could be measured by whether or not students met their goals, very few responses specifically mentioned student achievement in terms of an improvement in their reading level.

The results of this survey reveal that there is a need for more systematic program evaluation in volunteer literacy programs. Some standardization of evaluation criteria is necessary to "...provide educators and students with a gauge by which to measure the quality and effectiveness of their own programs" (White and Hoddinott, p.8). Literacy organizations such as the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta and the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy have a stake in the promotion of professionalism in literacy programs. Program evaluation is one way to introduce that professionalism. The provincial government, as the main funder of volunteer tutor literacy programs in Alberta, also needs to explore ways that coordinators can more fully participate in program evaluation for program improvement.

Recommendations

The Government of Alberta should provide opportunities for literacy coordinators to gain skills in program evaluation. They may choose to do this directly or they could assist the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta in this direction. Alberta Advanced Education should also make expert assistance available to coordinators who wish to pursue program evaluation.

In order to evaluate programs, standards of acceptable practice need to be established. It is encouraging to note that efforts have been made, and continue to be made in this direction. Some leadership has been shown in the establishment of standards from the provincial department of Advanced Education, which funds most of the adult literacy volunteer tutor programs in Alberta. Standards should be developed with input from literacy coordinators, volunteer tutors and adult students.

As well as training, the Department of Advanced Education (as the main funder of adult literacy programs in the province) should provide sufficient resources to programs in order to facilitate evaluation of literacy programs.

Suggestions for Further Research

It appears from the results of this study that program evaluation can mean many different things to different people. More research needs to be done to further examine the nature of program evaluation to clarify how those in the field of literacy education define "formal" and "informal" evaluation and how these processes affect literacy programs in the province.

Further research could also be conducted into the development of a framework method of program review appropriate for determining the

effectiveness of volunteer tutor literacy programs in Alberta. Part of such a framework should include setting standards for literacy practice. These standards could be used as a basis for comparison in evaluating programs for effectiveness. It is encouraging that this type of research has begun in Alberta and Canada; however, the particular nature of volunteer tutor programs must be taken into account when establishing program evaluation guidelines.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

A Survey of the Use of Program Evaluation in Literacy Programs

Please place a check in the appropriate box.

1. Your program location is: ❑ urban ❑ rural

2. Your program size is: ❑ under 20 students ❑ 20-40 students ❑ over 40 students

3. As coordinator, you are: ❑ part-time ❑ full time

4. You have been a coordinator for:
   ❑ less than 6 months
   ❑ 6 months-1 year
   ❑ 1-2 years
   ❑ 2-4 years
   ❑ over 4 years

5. Your program receives funding from the following sources: (Check all that apply.)
   ❑ Alberta Advanced Education
   ❑ A Further Education Council
   ❑ Service clubs or organizations
   ❑ Wild Rose Foundation
   ❑ Private donations
   ❑ A school board
   ❑ United Way
   ❑ Other (Specify)
   _____

6. Does your program receive any other support in kind? ❑ Yes ❑ No

7. If yes, indicate the type of support and who provides the support.(Check all that apply.)

Support in kind	**Provider**
❑ clerical support	_____
❑ supplies	_____
❑ administrative support	_____
❑ office space	_____
❑ postage	_____
❑ Other (Specify)_____	_____

8. Does your program have an advisory board? ❑ Yes ❑ No
   If so, how many people are on the board? _____

9. Who do the members of the advisory board represent? (Check all that apply.)
   ❑ Further Education Council
   ❑ Community
   ❑ Learners
   ❑ Tutors
   ❑ School Board
   ❑ Other (Specify)_____

10. What are the primary issues of concern for your advisory board (for example: fund-raising, tutor training, program enrollment, awareness of program in the community)?

11. What does **program evaluation** mean to you (as applied to an adult literacy program)?

12. Is formal program evaluation currently a part of your literacy program?
    ❑ Yes Please go to question 13

❑ No Please go to question 18

Complete this section only if you do conduct formal program evaluation.

13. Who is responsible for conducting evaluation in your program?
    - ❑ the literacy coordinator
    - ❑ literacy board members
    - ❑ the sponsoring agency
    - ❑ other (specify)_____

14. Whose opinions are solicited in the evaluation process? (Check as many as apply.)
    - ❑ the sponsoring agency (Further Education Council)
    - ❑ literacy tutors
    - ❑ literacy students
    - ❑ board members
    - ❑ the literacy coordinator
    - ❑ community members
    - ❑other (specify)_____

15. What determines whether or not program evaluation is conducted?
    - ❑ regular evaluation is a funding requirement
    - ❑ reguar evaluation is board policy
    - ❑other (specify)_____

16. Please check the appropriate response for program evaluation which occurs in your program.

	Never	Sometimes	Always
A. The program annually assesses the extent to which learners have achieved their goals.	❑	❑	❑
B. The program is aware of learners' progress after they have "graduated" from the program.	❑	❑	❑
C. The reasons for those who have dropped out are known.	❑	❑	❑
D. Students' opinions on the program are sought by appropriate means (e.g., interviews, informal conversations).	❑	❑	❑
E. Information is gathered about tutors' performance.	❑	❑	❑
F. Information is gathered about tutors' willingness to continue.	❑	❑	❑
G. Tutors' opinions on the program are sought by appropriate means (e.g., questionnaires, interviews).	❑	❑	❑
	Never	**Sometimes**	**Always**

H. An annual report is produced and distributed to interested participants and community members, including the advisory board.	❑	❑	❑
I. Priorities for the next year are based on the results of the evaluation.	❑	❑	❑
J. Plans are made to seek the resources or make the adjustments necessary to implement the priorities.	❑	❑	❑

17. In the past, what kinds of adjustments have been made to the program in response to ßevaluation findings?

Complete this section only if you do <u>not</u> conduct formal program evaluation.

18. Why do you think formal program evaluation is **not** a part of your literacy program? (Check all that apply.)

- ❑ not enough time to conduct program evaluation
- ❑ not enough training to conduct program evaluation
- ❑ not interested
- ❑ unsure of the benefits of program evaluation
- ❑ program evaluation is not required by sponsoring/funding agency
- ❑ program evaluation is not necessary
- ❑ other (specify)_____

19. Would you like to see formal program evaluation as part of your literacy program?

❑ Yes ❑ No Please give reasons for your answer.

ALL RESPONDENTS PLEASE ANSWER THE REMAINING QUESTIONS.

20. Some literacy coordinators feel that informal feedback provides them with sufficient information to carry on an effective literacy program and that formal evaluation is not necessary.
Do you gather informal feedback about your program? ❑ Yes ❑ No

21. If you gather informal feedback, which of the following sources provide feedback?
❑ tutors ❑ program sponsor
❑ learners ❑ community
❑ other (specify)_____

22. Have you made changes to your program on the basis of informal program feedback?
❑ Yes ❑ No

23. What types of changes have been made? (Check all that apply.)
❑ new recruitment policies for learners and tutors
❑ new program learning materials
❑ different tutor training techniques
❑other (specify)_____

24. How do you measure the effectiveness of these changes?

25. Who do you think should be involved in planning program evaluation? (Check all that apply.)
❑ literacy coordinator ❑ board members
❑ the sponsoring agency ❑ tutors
❑ an external "expert" ❑ students
❑other (specify)_____

26. Do you think a formal evaluation policy should be developed for all literacy programs funded by Alberta Advanced Education?
❑ Yes ❑ No

27. If a formal evaluation policy **were** developed, who do you think should participate in establishing that policy? (Check all that apply.)
❑ literacy coordinators ❑ literacy program board members
❑ literacy tutors ❑ Alberta Advanced Education
❑ literacy students ❑ Literacy Coordinators of Alberta
❑other(specify)_____

28. Please add any comments you may have about literacy program evaluation.

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions in this survey.
Your participation is appreciated.

APPENDIX B
COVERING LETTER TO COORDINATORS

January 9, 1992

Literacy Coordinator
Name of Literacy Program
Address
Address

Dear Literacy Coordinator,

Program evaluations can be a valuable tool for helping to determine whether or not a program is meeting the needs of the people it serves. As a literacy coordinator in Stony Plain, I am interested in knowing if our program is meeting those needs. However, the part-time hours I work make it very difficult to undertake any type of evaluation.

As part of my research for a Master's Degree in Adult and Higher Education, I am interested in finding out how other literacy coordinators deal with evaluation. Are there innovative ideas out there that may help me and other coordinators?

Please take a few minutes to answer the enclosed questionnaire. I'm interested in knowing what you consider to be the important issues in program evaluation. Feel free to add comments in the margins or on a separate sheet of paper. All of the information you provide is strictly confidential, and in no way will any individual coordinator or literacy program be identified in my research findings. Of course, your participation is voluntary and you have the right to opt out of answering the questions at any time. Please return the questionnaire using the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope by January 21, 1992.

A summary of this study will be published in the LCA News & Views. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Candice Jackson